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THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Sōtō Zen Buddhist tradition. The Priory is affiliated with Shasta Abbey, whose Spiritual Director and Abbess is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, O.B.C. Shasta Abbey, the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Sōtō Zen Church, is located in Mt. Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are disciples of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and follow her teaching.

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THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is published as a service to all who are seriously interested in the practice of Buddhism. Through the pages of the Journal, members and friends of the Priory are able to share their understanding and experience of Zen training; we welcome and encourage letters from our readers. Opinions expressed in each article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Abbot, Throssel Hole Priory, or the Editor. The Journal is published quarterly: a year's subscription is £4.25.

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To Our Readers

It may not seem so at first but Zazen is an act of faith. We grasp the will and learn to sit still in the midst of all the difficulties and disappointments, the joys and sorrows and uncertainty of daily life. When we sit down to meditate we are expressing our belief in the Buddha Nature, the bright, eternal Mind of Zen which permeates all things; and as we go on in training, this belief grows almost imperceptibly into the certainty that the Dharmakaya (or Cosmic Buddha) does exist — for It not to exist becomes unthinkable. By choosing to train ourselves we are strengthening our faith and allowing it to appear; the seed of Buddhahood lies deep within all of us waiting to be nourished and realised. However, sometimes we feel that our faith has deserted us and we are left in the darkness of confusion and indecision. At such a time we become acutely aware of our own suffering and sense the sorrow which fills the universe. Then we need to sit very still, and offer up all that we are experiencing to the Cosmic Buddha to be received and cleansed. We have to let go of suffering; we do this by finding out for ourselves that all-acceptance *is* indeed the key to the gateless gate.

Know that the faith which lives in your heart can never be completely destroyed. On the evening of February 12, at the Priory we celebrated the Buddha's *Parinirvana* (Nehan); the form of this ceremony expresses beautifully the great truth that the Light of the Dharma can never be lost. During the chanting of the scriptures, the Celebrant extinguishes the candles on the main altar and all the Zendō lights are turned off; this represents the death of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Buddha of this world. In the darkness, the incense box is carried around the congregation and then returned to the altar; the perfume of the incense represents the merit of our meditation which reaches into every corner of our lives and also the sweet

medicine of the Dharma which is the cure for all mortal sickness. We are asking the Light of Buddha not to abandon us to ignorance and despair, and we show our sincerity by persevering in our training. The Celebrant then goes to the Founder's Shrine, where a light is always shining, and returns with a lighted candle with which he relights the candles on the altar; at the same moment, all the Zendō lights are turned on. The Light only *seems* to disappear. By following the Buddha's teaching and trusting the Voice of the Lord, by going on however dark and lonely it becomes, we learn to live within the Truth and realise our own enlightenment.

While the *Scripture of Kanzeon Bosatsu* is chanted, everyone present offers incense out of gratitude for the Buddha's great compassion. The offertory at the end of Nehan expresses the depth of His compassion:

The Dharma Body of the Buddha cannot be seen so long as one is within duality for it is beyond birth and death, filling all things. Out of compassion for all living things the Buddha appeared in the form and figure of a human being. For this great act we bow in gratitude and pray that we may be able to illuminate our minds from delusion....The Buddha transcended desire and used the blessing of his understanding to help all who are deluded. After all delusion is removed that which remains is called the True Form, the Form of Buddha, all. The merit of this Form has been a light for all from the far past until the present time....

(Keizan Zenji, *Zen is Eternal Life*, p. 310.)

The Dharma is not affected by the arising and disappearance of worldly forms and karmic delusions. It goes beyond all opposites and remains true whether we believe in it or not — It is the very source of this and all other worlds. But the Truth of Buddhism must be experienced for oneself through meditation in daily

life; only then can we begin to understand it. Thus, training and enlightenment are one and undivided.

Should you touch the Truth your every action will be vital and express the Way naturally for your every action will be fully understood and digested Truth performed in the ordinary daily activities of an ordinary man....the Way of Truth existed from the very beginning and makes no special appearance now, which is as it should be.

(Dōgen Zenji, *Zen is Eternal Life*, p. 174.)

We pray that all may find the Truth quickly and realise the undying compassion which fills the universe.

* * *

Announcement

In line with our policy of using English translations of scriptures and Buddhist terms whenever possible, we have translated the title *Rōshi* as *Rev. Master*. The qualifications of a *Rev. Master* are identical to those of a *Rōshi*. The title *Rev. Master* will be the form of address used for a monk of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Sōtō Zen Church who has experienced kenshō and received the certification of his or her Master after having completed a minimum of five years training. *Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett* retains her certification as a *Rōshi* from her Master, the Very Reverend Keidō Chisan Kōhō Zenji, as recognised by the Head Office of the Sōtō Sect in Japan. The change of title merely reflects an attempt to make the meaning clearer.

* * *

Choosing Your Way

Rev. Master Daishin Morgan, O.B.C.

I was recently in Norwich where there is a shrine dedicated to St Julian, a medieval anchoress and saint, whose book *Revelations of Divine Love* has inspired many. When I found out about the shrine my first reaction was to go and see it; then I read some information that indicated it was a centre for those who wished to practise St Julian's teaching. I was delighted to hear there were people keeping alive her contemplative tradition, but I no longer wanted to go to the shrine. A strange reaction, perhaps, but I felt I did not want to disturb those who were doing their own practice; and as I had no interest in practising their form of prayer, being content with Zen, there was no purpose in going. Had the shrine been just another museum to past devotions I would not have hesitated to go. Just as at the Priory we expect those who come here to practise meditation as it is taught here, so I would expect to practise the Way of St Julian if I were to visit her shrine. Since people there were practising seriously, it seemed inappropriate to go and just be a tourist, wasting their time and disturbing their peace to no purpose. This does not mean I felt they were doing anything wrong, quite the reverse, but it does indicate my attitude towards other religions.

At present the various schools of Buddhism are adapting themselves, each in its own way, to Western culture. Each teacher within these schools is going about it slightly differently. The number of possibilities offered to those trying to find their Way is therefore multiplying exponentially. It is a time of great experimentation. Only those experiments which are properly founded will survive; those that do not survive will provide lessons in what not to do. In this situation, there are certain perils for both experienced meditators and those just

starting out. Many people are like children in a sweet shop overcome by a giant WANT but unable to choose and enjoy the sweets. As they stuff in one kind, their attention is already on another, so they end up getting sick without really tasting any of them. So how do you choose, and having chosen, how do you respond to the appeal of the other Ways?

Most people start out by shopping around. This is fine, provided it is clearly understood that it is a phase, and the sooner it is over with the better. There is no virtue in shopping around for its own sake; if the product is genuine the price tag will be the same. You can tell the genuine product by careful observation of those who practise a particular Way. If you have a feeling of disquiet, even though all the words may be very pretty and sound true, if the teacher or close disciples do not keep the Precepts, then it is one to avoid. Look at what sort of people those who are most committed turn out to be. If they make their lives an expression of training and speak the Truth simply and directly (even though that may scare you a little), if there is a *rightness* about it, then it is a Way worth looking into.

When I first met my teacher, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, I knew right away that here was somebody with a genuine experience of the Truth. That she knew how to teach was made clear by the behaviour of those who were with her. On closer contact with her disciples, that first impression was confirmed. Nobody was perfect, but there was an underlying sense of being for real that was more important than whether or not what was said or done agreed with my opinions. In fact, many things went against my opinions and I realised I would have to change if I wanted to follow her teaching. In Truth, Buddha recognized Buddha, and Buddha bowed to Buddha. The Buddha Nature within me recognized and responded to the Buddha Nature which she so clearly manifested. I do not mean that trumpets sounded and heavenly choirs sang — far from it. But there was a quiet intimation that this was the genuine article. It was then up to me to decide what

to do. Once you recognize a real teacher you must then follow their teaching in detail if you wish to find what they have found.

As with any choice, you must make up your mind and live with the consequences. Having once chosen, what purpose is there in going to other teachers or other places except to be a spiritual tourist? I get rather tired of people telling me that all Ways are the same. They are spectacularly *not* the same. They are going to the same place but by different routes and with different signposts along the way. If you want to travel to the Priory from the South Coast, it does not make much difference whether you go via the M5 and M6 or around London and up the M1. But you must make up your mind and stick to it. If you make a mistake and end up in Cornwall then you reassess the situation and start again from there. Too many people like nothing better than going round and round "Spaghetti Junction" in the Midlands, admiring all the roads that lead off from there, but never going any further themselves

To decide which Way to follow should not involve a rejection of anything. During the ordination ceremony of a Sōtō Zen monk, the ordainee is led to a statue representing his or her past teachers and old religion. They do three bows to express their gratitude and say farewell as they have only been able to arrive at their present stage through the kindness of those who have taught and helped them in the past. From this point on, they concentrate on their Ordination Master's teaching. The same thing can be done by a lay trainee who was brought up a Christian, feels he owes a lot to Christianity, but who now believes the Way for him lies in Zen. The trainee must offer his respect and gratitude to Christianity and its teachers, not blaspheme or deny there was ever anything real and cast it off as though it was something evil. The Way of Zen is to embrace all things and follow the teaching. We do not need to judge one Way over another or one teacher over another. We need to be still enough to recognize which Way is the true one *for us* and then follow it — nothing more.

Recently, I have been asked by a lot of people how they can practise Zazen as a Christian. I and the other monks at the Priory are only qualified to teach Sōtō Zen as taught by our Master. I would advise those wishing to synthesize the two to find a qualified teacher who has found the Truth by this method. If they cannot find such a person, then my advice is to choose between one of the Christian contemplative traditions, or wholeheartedly become a Buddhist. In Zen the Way is taught by the Master-disciple relationship in some form. When a trainee comes to a Master to learn they must be willing to lay aside everything that has gone before, all their opinions and notions, and be willing to change everything. This takes faith and courage. By acting on this faith you come to know for yourself and so find certainty. Certainty cannot be bought cheaply, and if you wish to quibble about the price you should perhaps re-examine what it is you really want. Teaching on its deeper levels cannot be offered to somebody who is still not sure if they really want to pay the price. It is true that you can learn to meditate by going to different places and teachers, or even by straddling two traditions. However, if you want more than the first step, if you want the Truth of Zen, then you must make your choice and stick with it.

Once a number of people truly commit themselves to a Way then they begin to form a living mandala¹ a true manifestation of the harmony of the Sangha, a true refuge. This only happens when each individual concerns himself with how he should follow the teaching at the centre of the mandala, willingly offering whatever he can, whatever is truly asked of him. This harmony is a tangible reality that goes far beyond the one-dimensional 'unity' sought by those who spend their energy trying to bring different religions or Ways together into a kind of shapeless mass. There is a deep connection between the members of a mandala, and yet each person still concentrates on his or her own training. Similarly, there is a deep connection between all the different mandalas, yet each mandala concentrates on its own practice. If each individual and each mandala does this then the true

harmony of the Sangha will show itself without contention. Ever since Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted the Truth to Makakashyo the teaching has been passed from Master to disciple down to the present day. This Transmission cannot even be dreamed of by those who attempt to synthesize a Way based on their opinions of what they like or dislike.

* * *

Notes

... A *living mandala* is a group of people who are willing to give up everything for the sake of the Truth. The teacher or Master takes the position at the centre as the Buddha we see in this world. His or her function is to point the Way and be a pipe for that which he or she represents. This is accomplished by doing the finest job of training themselves that they can. Each member of the mandala gives and receives the teaching for all are Buddhas together.

* * *

The Buddhist Precepts

THE THREE TREASURES PRECEPTS

I TAKE REFUGE IN THE BUDDHA.
I TAKE REFUGE IN THE DHARMA.
I TAKE REFUGE IN THE SANGHA.

THE THREE PURE PRECEPTS

CEASE FROM EVIL.
DO ONLY GOOD.
DO GOOD FOR OTHERS.

THE TEN GREAT PRECEPTS

DO NOT KILL.
DO NOT STEAL.
DO NOT COVET.
DO NOT SAY THAT WHICH IS NOT TRUE.
DO NOT SELL THE WINE OF DELUSION.
DO NOT SPEAK AGAINST OTHERS.
DO NOT BE PROUD OF YOURSELF AND DEVALUE OTHERS.
DO NOT BE MEAN IN GIVING EITHER DHARMA OR WEALTH.
DO NOT BE ANGRY.
DO NOT DEFAME THE THREE TREASURES.

Reading the Kyojūkaimon

David Powers, Lay Minister, O.B.C.

*(The following article first appeared in the
Berkeley Buddhist Priory Newsletter, Fall 1981)*

One of the most useful and powerful parts of my training is the daily reading of the *Kyojūkaimon*, the sixteen Precepts written by Zen Master Keizan, together with the Commentary by Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett. When I first began reading the *Kyojūkaimon*, I must say I had only a very foggy idea what it was about. But as I continued to read it and meditate, things began to become more clear. Sometimes one of the Precepts has seemed to come to life and stand out in relief as I went about my daily business. The two particular Precepts with which this has happened are:

"Do not speak against others."

Do not speak against the Lord of the House. Every person, every being is the Temple of the Lord wherein the Lord dwells, the still water wherein the dragon lives. If you speak against others you speak against the Lord of the House. Do not try to divide the Lord of the House; do not try to cause war within the Lord; do not try to make the Lord make war upon himself. "In Buddhism, the Truth and everything are the same; the same law, the same enlightenment and the same behaviour. Do not allow anyone to speak of another's faults."

— Do not find fault with the Lord of the House.
"Do not allow anyone to make a mistake in Buddhism."
— To speak against the Lord of the House is the gravest mistake of which I know.

"Do not be proud of yourself and devalue others."

It is enough for me to *know* the Lord of the House, to know that he dwells within all things. How can there be devaluation of others if they are the Temple of the Lord? How can there be pride if all possess equally within the Lord? "Every Buddha and every Ancestor realises that he is the same as the limitless sky and as great as the universe. When they realise their true body there is nothing within or without; when they realise their true body they are nowhere more upon the earth." — There is nothing to be proud of and nothing to be devalued.¹

One day I began to realize that I was breaking these Precepts time after time during the day so I started to make an effort to keep them. The first thing that happened was that I found I had about 25% to 50% less to say during my normal conversations when I quit judging, criticizing or making fun of others. Although dramatic, this change was not too difficult once I made the effort. However, the next level in keeping the first of these Precepts was much more subtle and difficult. I would find myself listening to others criticize someone else and to some extent supporting them just by nodding my head slightly or rolling my eyes or with a facial expression that indicated consent. These little gestures of consent would frequently result in two or three minutes of breaking the Precepts with criticism. When I began to stop doing this the effect it had on my interactions was surprising, and after a while people tended not to run someone or something down when I was around.

Reading the *Kyōjūkaimon* has also had other effects. For example, there have been times when I was just about to do something (or in the middle of it) when one of the Precepts would come to mind, like "Cease from evil." At these times the Precepts have kept me out of a fair amount of trouble. At other times I have been pondering over a decision (like should I write off this lunch as a business expense, or was it social?) when I just stop and turn to the Precepts. There is "Do not steal" and the decision

is suddenly easier. I do not have to think "Will I be audited by the Inland Revenue, and if so, can I prove that we talked about business?" The truth is it was just a friendly lunch, not business, and the decision is that simple.

It is important when putting the Precepts into practice to use them as a guide to avoid mistakes and not to use them to be unnecessarily harsh with oneself. For example, in the above case it is useful to recognize that declaring a lunch as a business expense when it is not, would be making a mistake. However, there is no benefit in going beyond this and saying that I am training poorly because I almost broke the Precepts and therefore I am *bad*. It can be a very severe mistake to misuse the Precepts in this way and in fact one is actually breaking the Precepts by doing so. I have found the Precepts to be most helpful when used as a gentle guide to point the way when faced with the decisions and problems of everyday life. It is not possible to keep all of the Precepts literally at all times, but we must do the very best we can.

One of the things that surprised me about trying to keep the Precepts was that some of them actually get a little easier with practice. A good example is anger. When I started out trying not to get angry it seemed almost impossible. This was because when I realized that I was angry, the anger was already overwhelming. It was like trying to stop Niagara Falls. But with some persistence, I began to notice my anger as it started to arise. When I was able to see the anger arising, it also became easier not to get caught up in it. The anger did not disappear, but I did not necessarily have to do anything with it, such as yell at someone or defend myself. Sometimes the anger just comes and goes very quickly when I recognize it and do not get tangled up in it and feed energy into it. This is like a large boulder sitting at the top of a hill. Once the boulder starts to roll down the hill it gathers momentum and becomes more and more difficult to stop. But if you watch the boulder very carefully at the top of the hill and see when it

just begins to teeter you can steady it without too much effort. Trying to keep the Precepts is like carefully watching the boulder. The more you practise the better you get at keeping the boulder balanced and seeing when it starts to teeter. In this way, one of the big problems that comes up for me is now much easier to train with than it was when I first started.

The thing that is most helpful to me about reading and taking the Precepts is that I can do it now. I do not have to wait until I have more faith or until I decide if I want to be a monk or until I go to sesshin or until everything is *just right*. The Precepts are something that I can put into my everyday training now, and they get straight to the heart of what I am trying to do. Reading the *Kyōjūkaimon* and Commentary takes me about 20 to 30 minutes. It is important to read in a place where there is as little distraction as possible, and to give yourself fully to the reading without the diversion of a cup of coffee or conversation. Reading just before meditation, or just after, also seems to be helpful. I try to read the *Kyōjūkaimon* every day, or half one day and half the next if there is not time all at once. I am sure that it would also be helpful to read it twice a week or once a week if that is all the time you can find. The benefit seems to come from reading and practising on a regular basis, so that the Precepts weave themselves into the fabric of our everyday life in the same way that daily meditation does.

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Notes

1. Keizan Zenji, *Kyōjūkaimon*, with Commentary by Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett (Shasta Abbey Press, 1977), pp. 10-11.

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Through the pages of the Journal, members and friends of the Priory are able to share their understanding and experience of Zen training; we therefore welcome and encourage letters from our readers. The articles we publish, by both priests and lay Buddhists, are practical and relevant to daily life and based on the writer's personal experience of meditation.

If you do not yet subscribe to *The Journal of Throssel Hole Priory* we invite you to do so now. Subscriptions to the Journal also help support the Priory. This is one important way by which you, together with other members of the Sangha, can contribute to the Priory's work of fostering the growth of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in this country.

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One year's subscription costs: £4.25

Foreign rates	——	Surface:	£4.25	
		Air:	£5.00	Europe
		:	£6.25	Other

* * *

Building Fund Report



On a bright and clear February day, we finally took delivery of our large, residential caravan. Fortunately, the ice on the roads had melted by the time the caravan arrived. This made the work a little easier. There was one tricky moment; as the caravan was being winched off its special carrier it slipped to one side (photo above). This could have been very awkward, but when the truck driver called out, "Does anyone have a penknife?" we knew there was nothing to worry about. After much trial and error, we manoeuvred it around the chapel corner and the journey up the hill went smoothly. The caravan was then eased into the car park (photo right) and firmly anchored down behind the Zendō. All the services have been hooked up providing an extra lavatory and shower, and more sleeping space during large retreats; these are most welcome and appreciated.

There has been a fairly good response to the latest Building Fund appeal, considering the depressed state of the economy. To date, the total amount received or covenanted is a little over £5000. This is not enough to finish the shell of the building this year as hoped, so (subject to planning approval) we have decided to build the top section in block instead of wood; this means we can continue working on the shell of the building, as weather and funds allow, without the structure getting damaged.

We have started converting the old office in the main house into a kitchen area; this should be finished by Jūkai and make cooking for over 30 people much less harrowing. After five years of inactivity, the tractor is back in business again. Work on the new access road and garage should begin soon — once the various local government departments have completed their paperwork.

[Photographs: Rev. Master Jimyo Krasner]



The Black Beast of Fear

Rev. Master Jimyo Krasner, O.B.C.

The luminescent darkness takes the shape of a great beast, blacker than the darkness — the beast of fear.¹

For my whole life, as far back as I can remember I was terrified of speaking in public. It is a fear many people have, but mine was so intense it was almost pathological. As a small child at school I was so overawed that for the first few months I would not speak at all. Later on in childhood, and during my early teens, to be asked to speak in front of the class was so traumatic I would become nauseous and ill. As I grew older the problem improved to some extent, but I would still be tongue-tied and miserable in front of any large group. By my student years I had managed to devise enough of a veneer of self-confidence to survive and appear no different from others, but I definitely avoided any type of public speaking; in fact anything which involved being the centre of attention in a group of people. Others told me they had had the same fear, and assured me it would vanish as I grew older, or if I practised speaking in public whenever possible. However, this did not seem to work for me; every time I plucked up enough courage to try again I was gripped by the same numbing terror, and every failure increased my despair of ever overcoming the problem.

For my first few years as a monk I was rarely called upon to do anything in front of an audience. I thankfully sat quietly in lectures and group discussions, and since I never had to face up to the fear I could almost believe it had gone. I hoped so. It did not rear its ugly head again to any great extent until I was about to do Kessei.²

The ceremonies of Kessei are performed by every monk before he or she can be certified as a Teacher of Buddhism

The monk, as Abbot or Abbess, must demonstrate the ability to function as a priest — he must show that he knows how to run a temple, do ceremonial, and teach others. However, more is required than just the ability to perform the practical duties of a priest. At Jōdō (the Abbot's question-and-answer ceremony) the monk stands upon the altar in place of the Buddha statue, and answers questions put to him by each of his fellow monks in turn. He must show through his meditation that no matter what he is asked, or whatever happens, he can be still and show the Truth to others through his words and actions.

When one reads descriptions such as this, it is easy to believe that anyone called upon to perform such a ceremony must be of a different breed from oneself, or at any rate must have gone far enough in training to be completely beyond such problems as fear. I myself had often thought this must be the case. In fact, almost everybody is frightened at the prospect of doing Kessei; for while it is only done when one's Master knows one is capable of doing it, the monk himself may not know this for certain. My fellow monks who had done these ceremonies before me had told how they coped with the fear. It seemed that most of them sat very still, and when they actually got involved in the preparations for the Kessei, the fear lessened and ceased to be such a problem. One told me he simply accepted the fact that if he could not do it he would try later on when his meditation had deepened.

None of these solutions seemed to work for me. When I tried to sit still, the fear loomed larger than ever, and I couldn't face the prospect of failing — yet again! In the days leading up to my Kessei, the fear in fact increased, for I was afraid I would become speechless and almost paralysed with fright as I had in the past. A large part of me wanted to back out and forget the whole thing, but I would not. This was partly out of pride and stubbornness — monks junior to me had done it, so I felt I must too; and anyway, I hated admitting defeat. This same pride prevented me from talking to anyone about my difficulties although I longed to, for I felt in a vague, unformulated sort of way that others might think less of

me if they knew how terrified I was. But pride was not my only reason for going on. There was also the knowledge, so faint I was barely aware of it, that I *could* do this somehow. This knowledge was partly based on my memory of Hossen (the Chief Junior's question-and-answer ceremony) which I had done about three years earlier. I had been extremely frightened, but something had pulled me through, so I knew it could be done.

As time went on, I clung to this knowledge more and more for when I had about two days to go I still felt as though everything was against me. The Abbot at Kessei is very dependent on his assistants and helpers for the ceremonies to be a success. At very short notice, mine began to drop out. They had urgent work and other legitimate reasons, but even so it felt as though I was being abandoned. At about the same time, a little voice inside began telling me I must clean up my past karma before I could do the ceremonies completely; "répair all rifts" were the exact words used. When I meditated on this, it seemed to mean having as my assistants people I had quarrelled with in the past, or did not get on with particularly well, in order to learn to trust them. It also meant writing letters to other people to patch up old misunderstandings when, my brain reasoned, I should leave such things until later, and be rehearsing the ceremonies. Yet somehow, repairing these rifts had to be a priority and I followed the right course in spite of, or perhaps because of, the intense fear.

So with about twenty-four hours to go, and still much to be done, my guts were still a mass of knots and I could barely eat or sleep. But during the last few days, the knowledge that I could do it had more and more come to mean asking the Cosmic Buddha for help, for it seemed the only thing left to do. Now, as the day came closer, I found myself praying almost constantly; "I can't do this alone; Lord, please help me!" I had asked in meditation for help before this, but had never prayed in quite this way. Throughout my youth I had been an atheist and afterwards had felt that prayer played no part in Buddhism. But I have heard it said that there are no atheists in fo

holes, and now I was quietly desperate, so I prayed to the Lord day and night. It became the most important thing to do, the *only* thing that mattered. Interestingly, it never occurred to me at this time to doubt whether my prayers would be answered. I couldn't do it alone, and I was going to do it, so they *had* to be; it was that simple. And while my guts churned, my knees shook, and my brain cried out there was no way I could do it, I hung on to the certainty that I *would* be helped. I was so sure of this that when my chief assistant told me in a fit of depression that she felt as though the roof was falling in, I laughed and told her that was fine, to let it fall, it couldn't hurt us. Yes, the roof could fall in — I could be paralysed with fear, trip over my own toes, be unable to answer a single question at Jōdō, but none of it mattered.

On the night before the ceremonies I stayed up late with my two assistants to do a final rehearsal for Jōdō. It was about midnight, and I was reading the verse in which the Abbot offers incense to the Buddhas and Ancestors, and his own Master, and asks for their help in doing Kessei. As I did this something happened which was so quiet and so subtle that I almost missed it. It was as though something moved, and for a moment I knew *for certain* that everything would be all right.

I still slept little and awoke with the same numbing fear. But I realised what had changed the night before. I no longer needed to ask for help for I knew it had been given. I did not need to call to the Lord; he was standing right in front of me, always had been, and always would be. I could not see this in the accepted sense, nor could I say anything had "happened", but I was absolutely certain of His existence.

There is not much to say of the ceremonies themselves. The intense fear continued, but it did not matter in the least. I did not remember afterwards many of the answers which were given at Jōdō. I say "were given" for I did not know where they came from, or that I knew such things. But one stands out, for someone asked me how you deal with

intense fear which will not go away. I answered straight from my own experience, for as I spoke my knees were still shaking so much I could hardly stand, but I *knew* it didn't matter, and when the fear really doesn't matter, there is no need for it to go away.

This for me was in some ways the most important thing I had learned that day. I knew for certain the Lord was with me at all times, so the fear no longer mattered. There was something beyond it, something much greater than my own feelings and difficulties and anything which could happen to me; none of these things mattered. I had not just discovered this; in fact I realised I had always known it to some extent. My faith had been growing with the years of training, but, as when one turns up a dimmer switch slowly, the increase in light may not be apparent, so I had scarcely noticed the gradually increasing confirmations of the existence of the Cosmic Buddha. Now, forced to deal with one of my greatest fears, the dimmer switch had been given an extra hard turn. That is *all* that happened and I have no wish to make this sound more important than it was. There was, and is, much more to be done, and the Light can become much brighter! Nevertheless, I shall always be grateful for the fear, which I had previously considered a great obstacle, for it was this which helped me to know the Infinite Love of the Cosmic Buddha.

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Notes

1. Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett, *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom* (Shasta Abbey Press, 1977), p. 181.
2. For a full description of the Kessei ceremonies see Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life* (Dharma Publishing, 1976) p. 344ff.

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GUEST DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Jūkai 1983 sesshin was fully booked by early January, and many applicants were disappointed. Because of the great demand for places, we have decided to hold a second Jūkai sesshin this year from October 2 - 8. People who have visited the Priory before and would like to take Lay Ordination (or have already done so) are invited to apply for this autumn Jūkai. Please send in your applications as early as possible to ensure your place. Because of this extra sesshin there are changes in our retreat schedule for later this year; these changes are listed below:

CANCELLED

Advanced Retreat:	Sept. 30	-	October 2
Intro. Retreat:	October 7	-	October 9
Segaki Sesshin:	October 24	-	October 30

ADDITIONS TO SCHEDULE

Jūkai Sesshin:	October 2	-	October 8
Intro. Retreat:	October 21	-	October 23
Segaki Retreat:	October 28	-	October 30

CHANGE OF DATE

Summer Sesshin:	July 24	-	July 30
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A written application (with deposit) is required for all retreats and longer stays at the Priory. It is advisable to send applications to the Guestmaster at least three weeks before your intended visit as retreat places are very limited; all applications are reviewed and confirmation sent by letter. Overseas visitors do not need to send a deposit. If you have booked a place but cannot come, please let us know as soon as possible even if you have to cancel at the last minute. It is helpful if people coming to Advanced Retreats let

us know if they are travelling by car and can offer lifts to others. A stamped-addressed envelope is always appreciated.

The Priory is open to guests by appointment from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on most days. Those who wish to visit for an hour or so should write or call before they arrive. Meditation instruction and private spiritual counselling (sanzen) are usually available at these times, but please call first to make arrangements. There is no charge for these services.

People who wish to stay for a while at the Priory and have not been here before *must* begin by attending an Introductory Retreat. More experienced congregation members should note that Introductory Retreats are not exclusively for beginners; they may apply for these weekends as well, and are also encouraged to visit the Priory at other times.

If you have any questions about our Guest Programme or lay training at Throssel Hole Priory, please write to the Guestmaster.

* * * *

The Mother of True Compassion

Dave Hurcombe

A little girl of seven even may be the teacher of the four classes of Buddhists and the mother of True Compassion to all living things.

Dōgen Zenji, *Shushōgi*.¹

taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha has always been of great benefit to me. However, I have often had difficulty in understanding *taking refuge in the Sangha*. It is through training with my three year old daughter that I have come to understand it a little better. To *take refuge in the Sangha* is to take refuge in the Buddha Nature of everyone and everything around us. Young children, especially, make it easy for us to see their Buddha Nature within. Quite often, you will see normally reserved and unemotional adults down on their hands and knees becoming childlike again in the company of young children. Young children do not judge others; they are open and trusting. Only when they are taught to judge others, or when their trust is abused, do they lose this openness. It is quite natural for young children to be one with the Cosmic Buddha. They learn about duality from those around them, and soon forget what they know to be true within in order to be "at peace" with the world and with their parents. Although young children are complete they do need a lot of help in learning to grow; if the parents meditate they are more able to give their child this loving help. The parents are the representatives of the Cosmic Buddha and the child is completely open, willing and trusting towards them. This can easily be lost if the parents are not respectful and open also; if they do not recognise the Buddha Nature in their child. This is not to say that children are angels or saints. They are born with their own inherited karma and this will act upon them from birth. It is the responsibility of the

parents not to add to this karmic load but to do their own training. This will include trying to recognise the child's karmic patterns and helping the child to deal with these.

Through meditation I have come to understand more of the many facets of love. Love does not mean being indulgent or always giving in merely a superficial and worldly sense. It may mean doing something against all the advice of friends, doctors or child care advisers. This is not to say we shun advice from friends, ignore medical advice, or not bother to read literature on child care and development. But there are no hard and fast prescriptions for bringing up children, and there is no escape from one's responsibilities. Through meditation, I have been able to become a little more detached from feelings of guilt that have arisen for me as a parent — both the guilt that arises from situations where I say to myself "If only I had/had not done this, or had done it better, my daughter wouldn't have suffered so," and the guilt that arises over the years as patterns of behaviour are seen repeating themselves and causing suffering to my family. (Or decisions made long ago that still have their effects today and also cause suffering.) By becoming more detached from such guilt-feelings, and by beginning to accept that suffering exists both for myself and others, I move towards a position where I am able to see more clearly that which needs to be done. I can stop hitting myself over the head with a hammer and get on with loving my family in a more honest, unconditional and non-clinging way.

By deepening my meditation practice, I can become more aware of my child's karmic inheritance; thus I can better help my child by being more aware of the true source of some of her actions. I can also try to ensure that my own karmic tendencies do not add to her suffering, and thus be in a better position to be truly loving — no matter how this appears to the worldly mind. Always we must meditate and be willing to ask the Cosmic Buddha what we must do and act upon the answer. Sometimes we may know intuitively straight away what is the *right* thing to do. At other times the way may not be so

clear. There is no easy or perfect way. I often get caught up in trying to be the perfect parent (and feeling guilty when I'm not) but this is to usurp the place of the Cosmic Buddha. By meditating I allow the Cosmic Buddha to act through me. Mistakes will be made, but by being open and not getting caught up in guilt, I can learn from these mistakes.

Children can be wonderful teachers. In a pure and innocent way, they often seem to mirror a parent's actions. How humble I have felt when I've come across my daughter wagging her finger at a doll and admonishing it in an obvious imitation of my treatment of her. How often I hear the words and tone of voice I use to my daughter repeated exactly through her lips to some poor teddy bear! And I think to myself "Did I really say that? Did I really use that tone of voice?" But I know in my heart I did, and that what was lacking was respect for my daughter's Buddha Nature. In many other ways I find my daughter teaching me. Even after meditating for some years one can still have deeply ingrained patterns of behaviour one may not be completely aware of. Some while ago I noticed my daughter had started biting her nails. Friends advised that all children who suck their thumbs (my daughter is one) later go on to bite their nails. But I later realised with some surprise that she was merely copying my own behaviour. Now that I have more or less stopped the habit I have noticed my daughter has also stopped. Similarly, I have always tried to steer my daughter clear of eating too many sweets, and yet I have always had a very sweet tooth myself and have eaten far more sweets than has been good for my teeth or my body. It became increasingly difficult to tell my daughter that too many sweets were bad for her teeth, yet continue to consume large quantities myself. So I have tried to control my craving for sweets for the benefit of myself and my daughter. She is very quick to point out things which I ask her not to do yet which I do myself. There are sometimes good reasons for this which when explained to her she can usually accept. But she has a very keen and genuine sense of injustice, and when confronted by this coming from a small three year

old child it is very difficult to adopt a "and who do you think you are to tell *me* what I should and should not be doing?" Thus it is not what you say that counts, but what you say *and* what you do (or don't do!).

By recognising my daughter's Buddha Nature, I know that I am not in control of another person, nor should I try to be. Yet one must be responsible and raising children is a big responsibility. To do a good job of it, one has to put the selfish self out of the way and show one's own True Self. Buddha bows to Buddha. Training with my daughter, I have begun to find the truth of this.

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Notes

1. *Zen is Eternal Life*, p. 159.

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NEWS

Holiday Season. We wish to thank all our friends who sent us greeting cards and gifts this year. Your kindness and support are deeply appreciated. The Priory celebrated the Buddha's birthday on December 25. On New Year's Eve we held the traditional ceremony to thank Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and her own Master, the Very Reverend Keidō Chisan Kōhō Zenji, for the teaching given during the past year; and to ask their help for the year ahead.

Outside Retreats and Lectures. The Priory continues to provide a full programme of outside retreats and public lectures around the country and abroad. This winter, retreats and lectures have been held in Birmingham, Stratford, Salisbury, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Edinburgh; at Lancaster, Durham and Liverpool Universities; and at Ladywell House, near Preston. All the retreats and talks were very well attended. Many people who were first introduced to Zen meditation at these retreats have since visited the Priory to find out more about our Buddhist training and to deepen their understanding. Thus the Dharma slowly but surely spreads and the Light of Buddha increases in brilliance.

Monastic Events. Gill Fisher returned from Shasta Abbey early in December to continue her postulancy at Throssel Hole Priory. We welcome her to the community and wish her well in her training. On February 15 1983, Rev. Jigen Bartley completed five years of monastic training and is now addressed as Rev. Teacher Jigen in recognition of her experience and spiritual maturity. On the same day, Rev. Teacher Jigen performed *Shinzan* (The Installation Ceremony of an Abbot or Abbess; also translated as *Ascending the Mountain*) which marks the beginning of a Sōtō Zen monk's *Kessei* — the five chief ceremonies of a monastic term. We congratulate Rev. Teacher Jigen on the ceremony.

Funerals and Memorials. On February 27 a memorial ceremony was held for William Graham French, the husband of Dorothy French, and on March 4 for Roland Howard Bartley, Rev. Teacher Jigen's father. The following day a funeral ceremony was celebrated for Jean Ainslie (the wife of Bill Ainslie and the mother of Mary Jane) who died suddenly last December. At the ceremony all those present recite the *Names of the Ten Buddhas* and then the Celebrant continues alone:

We pray that the pure mirror of wisdom will share its light with you and that the true wind will cover you with the coloured halo so that you can be enlightened in the garden of the Bodhisattvas and work in the waveless sea that is immaculacy itself. We pray that you may receive our offerings as we say farewell to you within the clouds that hide the heavens from our sight....

We express our gratitude and love to our dead relatives and friends by offering up our own spiritual training for their benefit, and for the good of all living things.

Work projects. This winter has seen several improvements in living conditions at the Priory. The vestibule of the main house has been painted and now looks much brighter; in January, the central heating system in the house was overhauled by removing three radiators from the system, and re-routing the pipes — it is much warmer upstairs, and quite comfortable compared to previous winters. The coalshed has been given a thorough clean-up resulting in more space and far less clutter; the candle-making operation now occupies a corner of the shed. As always at this time of year, log-splitting and wood-sawing are a constant necessity.

This year we invite regular congregation members to visit the Priory and help us build the new meditation hall; not only by working on the building itself but also by doing other essential work in the kitchen or garden or tree-planting — wherever help is needed. All such work is valuable and will contribute either directly or indirectly to getting the meditation hall finished.

Garden News. Some unusually mild weather in December enabled us to do some tree transplanting and to start digging the vegetable garden in readiness for spring planting. A beech hedge has been planted along the bottom of the small top garden where we intend to plant a lawn and flowers. The lower garden now extends about twenty feet further into the field. The greenhouse has been repaired and is now "double-glazed" with plastic sheets to keep in the heat and to prevent leaks. If the mild weather continues we hope to begin planting early this spring. Any donations of small trees or shrubs, and vegetable or flower seeds are always welcome.

The tree planting scheme begun in 1976/77 has recently received a boost with a further 1200 trees being planted to establish more shelter belts. This will eventually enable us to reintroduce native trees on much of the Priory land; and then we hope to establish a refuge for wildlife, trees and plants that are presently endangered species. To save money we plan to propagate the trees ourselves, and so a small experimental seedbed will be used. Keeping the rabbits from eating the newly-transplanted trees is our biggest problem. Adequate fencing is too expensive to buy, so if anyone knows of grant-making bodies who might be prepared to help us with this, please let us know.

Animals. All the Priory animals are doing well. Our old dog Oscar is slowing down physically, but is as enthusiastic and friendly as ever. Arthur (was Amos) has grown into a large but gentle tomcat who enjoys weeklong expeditions into the surrounding countryside; he returns at his leisure to eat, sleep, and recover by the fire. Jane (née Naomi) is a stay-at-home cat who likes to accompany people on walks between the buildings. We are happy to announce that the goose has made friends with the duck; they visit each other regularly and spend much of their time together.

Donations. We are grateful to the friends and members of the Priory who have recently given us the following items: oven gloves, clothing, office supplies and scrap

paper; incense, charcoal, copper pipe; bread, cookies, and glass storage-jars; and several books on Buddhism and related subjects.

Begging Bowl. We are always looking for cardboard tubes for mailing posters; also needed are index-card size (5x3) filing boxes and a variable speed electric drill. The Kitchen requests nylon chopping boards and stainless-steel bowls (all sizes) and kitchen knives. We have just started making our own candles which is a considerable saving for us; so the Sacristy can now use white candle-stumps which will be melted down to make new candles. The following books would be very useful additions to our library:

1. S.G.F. Brandon, *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion*, 1970. This may only be available in the U.S.A.
2. H.W. Fowler, *Modern English Usage*, revised by Sir Ernest Gowers (Oxford University Press, 1965)
3. *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary.*

Finally, the Maintenance Department would be most grateful for a "stroboscopic timing lamp" (used, we are told, for checking the ignition timing of an engine.)

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BOOKS AND BUDDHIST SUPPLIES

NEW ITEMS

Shasta Abbey Tapes: Lecture tapes by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

Art of Meditation: Introductory tape, 90 min. £4.65.

Zen as Eternal Life: Introductory tape series which reaches considerable depth. 6 tapes, £25.15.

Dependent Origination: 40 min. tape, £4.30

Shōbōgenzo tapes: On the writings of Zen Master Dōgen. Four available:

Juki (Prediction of Buddhahood)

Kattō (Spiritual Enlightenment)

Arakan (The Arahant)

Hosshō (Reality) & Nyorai-zenshin (The Body of the Buddha)

£4.50 each. £17.25 the set of four.

Books

Buddhist Painting Book: Children's Life of the Buddha. Designed by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and illustrated by Rev. Mokugen Kublicki. £3.25.

Light of Asia by Sir Edwin Arnold. £2.40.

Other Items

Poster: Buddha & the 16 Arahants. £2.90

Meditation Clothing Instructions: for skirt, shirt, and pants - for men and women. £2.45 a set.

Window Prints: Transparent decals to stick on windows.

Lotus - 6" square (3 designs available) £1.10.

Dorje - 4" diameter circle. 80p.

Buddha Statue: 2½" high. £3.75.

Adoration of the Buddha's Relics: Copies to add to old Psalter (current Psalter has them). 30p.

DISCONTINUED ITEMS/PRICE CHANGES

Shasta Abbey Books & Gifts Catalogue: now 80p.

Becoming a Buddhist: Discontinued (new edition out soon)

Meditation in Sōtō Zen, Tape #1: Discontinued.

(Complete set of 12 tapes still available.)

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